

Sermon Notes

Disciples & Discipline

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

May 17, 2015

Introduction: Disciples & Discipline

This is a passage about discipline in the church, and for the church. “Church discipline” is a loving practice in the midst of sin and sinners. Although there have been many abuses of this practice—a practice taught by Jesus!—such abuses does not mean that it should be thrown to the scrap heap. The concerns should always be the honor of the Lord, the restoration of the person, and the health of the Church. Disciples are to be marked by discipline, and this is an *identifying* passage.

A Walk Through the Passage...

5:1—What was going on was public, and it was public in more than one way. Not only was this going on then and there in the midst of the congregation (and the congregation *was* aware of it), Paul has *also* received word of these goings-on. This is the first word about the impact of sin upon others; sin splatters.

What was this sin?

It is called “sexual immorality” (πορνεία) and it is described with a distinction: such is not even common among those who are *not* Christians! And then it is presented with discretion. Paul does not get into unnecessary soul-denting imaginations. He speaks of this inappropriate behavior according to the authority of the Law of God (Lev. 18). That’s what “this certain one” was doing. However, Paul is also concerned about what the Corinthians were *doing* and *not doing*...

5:2—The Corinthians have been puffed up (φουσιώω), and they have *not* mourned. The reality is that this certain one should have been removed (literally: lifted up and carried away) from among the community. There seems to be a play on words here. They were “puffed up” when they should have mourned; and instead of them being “puffed” or “lifted up”, they should have lifted this one up and out.

5:3—Paul, although absent, he is present in spirit, and he has already rendered a judgment (and remember, the problem is not a righteous judgment).

5:4—A “removal” is to occur. Actually, there’s more than one “removal” which is to occur. It’s not only a removal of this one, it’s also a removal of their own inactivity. All of this is weighty, yet it is to be done:

In the Name of the Lord Jesus—Christ’s authority/right

When they are gathered together—Christ’s Body

With the power of the Lord Jesus—Christ’s power

5:5—There is a change which is to occur; one way or another. This is called a handing over to Satan, for the destruction of his flesh (a dying), so that his spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord. While such removal from communion is firm, there is a reality of hope; this is (hopefully) *not* the final word about this person...and *it wasn’t!* (2 Cor. 2:8).

The behavior which has been going on is so contrary to the life of the Body of Christ, that for such a person to continue—remaining unrepentant—they are to no longer be considered part of the Body. There were other sins too...

5:6—The Corinthians were boasting in a sinful situation, somehow. Paul flatly says, *Your boasting is not good*. It’s not just a matter of the other guy’s sin impacting the congregation, *your own tolerance of sin* will act like a leavening influence on the whole community as well...and boasting is usually more publicly acceptable.

A couple of notes:

When we consider boasting in, or glorying in sin, we can imagine a number of ways that this can be done. In this case, it might have been a strong dose of “being progressive” and being filled with an enlightened understanding of sin. Or, it could have been that the person who was doing this might have been a prominent member, so that their boasting could have been that this person was a member of their congregation, and was really putting them on the map.

This also shows that there are distinctions in sins. For the one sin, he was to be removed; for their sin, they are told to cut it out. The ultimate question is one of repentance: have they turned?

5:7—Paul employs Passover imagery in order to call them to a clean and thorough break! This is because Passover was an identifying practice, and Paul is concerned about how this sin was now identifying them through their toleration and boasting. Paul calls them to who they are: *they are unleavened*. *Christ is their Passover*. And it’s because of the removal of leaven during the time of the Passover, that they were to make a clean break with the old, the previous, those ways, and they were to start over. Here, the calling is to repent. That’s the message for the certain one mentioned at the beginning of the passage, and that’s the message for the entire community.

5:8—This *identifying* imagery of Passover helps us understand part of the reason why Paul calls upon them to “keep the feast.” However, he is also calling them to community, or to communal behavior. He is reminding them of how they are supposed to behave because of who they are, and this is to be likened to a meal *together*. This is a call to a break from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and to practice sincerity and truth.

In Conclusion

Some reflections on church discipline...

